NOTES FROM THE VOID

The A Void Collective Fanzine

Issue Five, Winter 2025

FREE

Inside: Marabar Caves, Helen Verrill, Moon Haze, House of Cats, Hushed, Blackbird Project ....and more!

Why we love Piss Shivers

FUTURE CITIES FOR FUTURE CITIZENS

Utopia Development Corporation reconvene

"what does a government quango forced to do music look like?"

OUR MANIFESTO

No one should be excluded from performing their music in public because of their neurotype, disability, age, or inexperience. A band playing their first gig is as valuable as someone playing their thousandth, and the age of a performer has no bearing on how good they are or whether they should be given good gigs.

Some neurotypes and mental health conditions make it harder for musicians to find opportunities and make networking an impossible task, which means the gigs don't come. We aim to remove that barrier.

We understand that some music is deemed too 'weird' to be given good gigs: that's wrong, they shouldn't be relegated to the outer edges of open mic nights - they should be on the bills at proper gigs, with their name on the poster.

We are a group of musicians from various bands, and we aim for full inclusivity, to give valuable shows to the people who are ignored by some of the gatekeepers. We stand against ageism, ableism, exclusion of any kind, and favouritism. We stand for the overlooked and marginalised.

We make each gig valuable to the acts performing, with long-lasting impact. We have an etiquette guide that makes the shows stress-free, and once the gig has ended, we do things for the acts who have performed, whether it's recording them cheaply (or even free), helping with instrument repairs, or enabling them to go and do what we do elsewhere.

There was a void, and we filled it.

Read the long version at https://linktr.ee/avoidcollective

Editor's Note

Before I do anything else this issue, I must correct my own brain fart from issue 4. Throughout the Oscillator feature, I referred to their frontman Charlie as 'Chris'. This was pure idiocy on my part, and I'm happy to make this correction!

Recently, at an A Void show at the Lab, a small number of the audience members started flinging each other around, high-kicking, and rushing each other in an attempt to knock people over. Having been almost whacked in the face several times while just sitting watching the band, I moved to the side. I found myself thinking about how this kind of behaviour can impact gig-goers, and raised it in the A Void Collective WhatsApp chat, as well as doing some wider reading. The reaction was interesting, with some of the older members effectively saying, "fuck that shit, it's ridiculous", while the younger ones said that it was normal. On the night, our very own Louis had said to me that we'd had our first mosh pit.

From reading the excellent article at https://www.mttm.uk/features/crowd-killing-exactly-fuss/ I learned that this is common in modern Hardcore shows and is known as "Crowd Killing". Some of the videos I've seen on Instagram showcase behaviour that is straight-up physical assault, with members of the audience punching bystanders so hard that they're obviously seriously injured. It's hard for me to understand the appeal of this, and even harder to see it described as 'a mosh pit' when it's a million miles from what those words meant for most of the last 60 years since Punk broke. Even harder to fathom is the fact that it happens at all, given that the Hardcore scene (from the perspective of an outsider) seems to be nothing more than a bunch of British bands trying to emulate US hardcore shows of the 80s. The thing is, that kind of violence was deeply frowned upon by the bands around at the time, with Iain Mckaye of Fugazi famously being opposed to slam dancing and violence at gigs, going as far as stopping shows to tell audiences to quit it, and even kicking people out (with a refund in an envelope).

Me, pictured earlier

This kind of behaviour can't simply be seen as a form of positive self-expression, and has similarities with the punk-era habit of spitting on bands. The bands themselves hated it, but the audiences kept doing it because they thought it was a 'punk' thing to do. It wasn't, it was just shit. I'm sure that some local bands see this kind of behaviour as a seal of approval from their audience, much as Henry Rollins saw audience violence as affirmation during his years in Black Flag. But no band in Northampton is Black Flag, and there's really no need to encourage this when the venue and the evening is clearly not suited to it. And, let's be honest here, even Rollins has taken a more reflective view of his involvement in the violence that erupted at their shows.

Additionally, we must consider liability for any injury that happens at a show we're putting on. Who is liable for what can seem confusing at first, but it's actually simple: if someone is hurt because of a problem with the physical space of the venue, then the venue is liable; if it's the band causing the injury, then it's the band; and if it's an audience member hurting another audience member then it's the organiser who is on the hook for any damages. Legally, we have a duty of care to our attendees, and a small group of guys (it's almost always guys) dominating the front of stage area with borderline violence makes that hard to achieve. Ultimately, the Lab is too small for an audience to do that safely, at least when the show isn't a hardcore gig where everyone knows what to expect.

At the Oscillator gig, the band got the audience dancing as well, but this time it was respectful, joyful, no one pushing into others in selfish displays of machismo. All for that.

So, we're faced with a puzzle - how do we keep our gigs safe without looking like Grandpa Simpson shaking his fist at a cloud? We have to make the gigs accessible for everyone, and all attendees (including the bands) need to be aware of the different needs of those around them and adjust their behaviour accordingly. The alternative is to simply not book bands who will bring audiences like that with them, and that would be grotesquely unfair to those musicians. Got a solution? Drop us a line at avoidcollectivenn@gmail.com, we'd love to hear your suggestions.

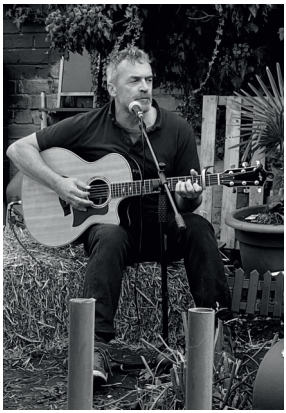
Anyway, welcome to a bumper issue five! We've doubled up this time, as otherwise the next zine would be out at Christmas and hardly anyone would see it, and we can't have that! So, here are a lot more pages than usual, packed with reviews, interviews, and opinions. Enjoy!

Why Hushed Matters

Russell Heyworth explains

Does Hushed Matter?... probably not yet, but it is trying to.

Let me explain. Hushed was set up a few years back to establish regular acoustic gigs for original song writers. Understandably pubs and venues prefer covers bands, playing songs that their customers know and love and will drink to. We felt it might be useful to create a space for original music to be heard.



Artists performing to a quiet, attentive audience was considered a rare treat. We were inspired by watching other gig organisers tell off audience members chatting, when others are trying to listen and especially the Contra Roots Club in Earls Barton, probably the best platform for song writers in the county, where they have signs up saying “No Talking”, we called the nights: “Hushed”. Help the performer, improve the performance = better audience experience.

We videoed a couple of nights and The Lab suggested we raise our game and soon we were putting on monthly events, inviting song writers and filming with 3 cameras to edit into better quality promo films with better audio, so artists had something to show for the experience.

We are in the third spiral of Hushed existence now. The Northamptonshire Community Foundation have financed a PA and some promo to re establish the group and we have run several performance days. At the Black Prince, The Pomfret Arms, The Pavilion Lawn at the Racecourse, the Semilong Community Garden and a stage at the Northampton Music Festival... so far so good.

We love curating these events, we bring a chilled vibe and try to make our stage accessible to anyone who wants to play. However, beyond pop up events and linking to festivals we still want to push the local scene more. Pubs who are reluctant to stage original acts, can now put on a Hushed Night, with 3 or more artists, so together, performers, the venue and Hushed all promote together to build a crowd and establish more events featuring local music . That’s the idea, so get involved if you are a local performer, pub or venue. We hope to bring this to surrounding villages too. Lovely places to live, but bereft of entertainment.

It’s absurd that a town the size of Northampton has such a small live scene. The town’s expanding by two miles in all directions and those new residents may be our next bands and audiences. The potential is massive. People enjoy a live music experience and I think even those making music could do more. Imagine if every musician, band member or singer went to just one local gig a month other than their own, supporting a scene which would in turn support them, our venues would be overflowing.

We definitely need more local festivals and the council need supportive policies beyond the annual Northampton Music Festival. In the meantime, if there is a way Hushed can help the local scene grow, then maybe, Hushed may start to matter.

Help us. Get involved join our Facebook group, perform, request an event, come and be a volunteer.
facebook.com/groups/hushed

A Guide To Better Living Via An Informed Understanding of The Past to Inspire The Future

Guitarist/Vocalist Chris Karbowy looks at what's gone and what's coming for **Utopia Development Corporation**.

Photos and cover by Tom Whitney

UDC have been around for a few years now, can you tell us how you got together in the first place, and if any of you came from previous bands?

We actually started as a continuation of a band called Threads (quick piece of advice for anyone looking to name a band: don't pick one of the most used words on the internet and expect anybody to be able to find you). So that was myself, Alex (bass) and Goodrich (vocals and guitar) plus the final Threads drummer Phil Warner, (who was the engineer of the first Threads ep Surgery, and staying with us though the second, The Emperor's New Misery to the very end of the band some point in 2014).

Chris: THREADS circa 2013, at the recording of TENM at Far Heath Studios, before we all got fat

Anyways, long story short, Lockdown came around and we had been toying with the idea of doing something again for a few years, so after relearning the old tracks and having a few practices, me, Goodrich and Alex pretty quickly got the writing bug again. Phil did not, and really only wanted to do a show again as Threads. Now, personally, I hate nostalgia shows. What I've always loved about music, especially at the local level, is it's always changing and evolving so the thought of a reunion show never appealed to me.

Churchy came onboard to drum for us at this point. We all knew each other really well from him having been the frontman of one of the greatest local bands of the era, Knees. He and Steph Stanton had gone on to do noise rock two piece La Folivora in the interim, with Steph providing the synths and Churchy drumming. He always played with such raw energy and the guy is just so bloody lovely that asking him to join up was a no brainer for all of us.

Who came up with the local council/corporate uniform that you've all adopted?

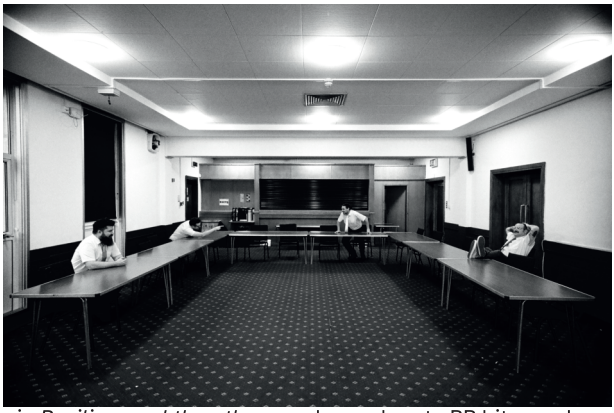
I've always had a huge fear of bureaucracy, it makes me feel quite ill. There is something so inherently dystopian with all the 3rd wave New Towns that were designated back in the late 60's and the founding of the Development Corporations tasked with carrying that out. I'm sure everyone has seen the fantastic news reel about Linda Jardim's Energy In Northampton, and I always thought: what if the Northampton Development Corporation had really doubled down on churning out music, what does a government quango forced to do music look like in 2020? From there the uniform was a logical next step, plus it means you don't have to think about what the fuck your gonna wear to play a show, which is a godsend!

The first time I saw you play was at Twinfest 2023, and you had an extra 5th member who wasn't Joe. Joe appears to be kind of a floating member, so what is his status? Do I understand correctly that he's been responsible for a lot of your lyrics?

Joe comes and goes as he pleases, he's got an open invite to turn up whenever he wants, we try

to be as noncorporate as possible, and with him doing the extra stuff (3rd guitar, keys, some backing vocals etc., sometimes provided by Dan Battison who again is on an open invitation) it's really up to him. He is a key member of the lyric writing department, along with me and Goodrich so hopefully we can find him when we get back to writing.

Your track on the A Void CD, "Cyberpest 2020" seems to be very specific in who it's aimed at. Am I imagining that, or is there an individual out there who is the real cyberpest?



Oh they're out there.

There's a lot of extra curricular activity with members of the band, you in Bloody/bath, Churchy in Piss Machine (and several others), Joe in Pavilion, and the other Dan running Blast Chamber, do you ever feel that has slowed down the career of UDC?

I think career might be a stretch, but no, I think really having other projects outside of this band is a very positive thing and something I would actively encourage people to do! Play with as many people as you can, get involved in the process wherever possible! The key is communication with the bands you're in and good use of calendars to track when you're booked up. If you can find them get a good Rolodex of deps who can step in (big shout out to Ethan Whitby, Tucker & Josh Greene for having all provided those services for us in the past)

Given you're all so intrinsically linked to the local scene, what are your thoughts on it? What could be improved and what do you think is bang on?

We could really use some better kit at some of the smaller venues. As someone who occasionally dips his toes into the world of sound engineering, there is a bit of a microphone drought!

If you could do anything, what would you like UDC to do?

Get this fucking EP out

Ah, the EP! Is it really ever coming out? It's been over a year since No Factories dropped, and it felt at the time that the song was a lead in to the EP, with the full release due soon after. What happened?

It's done, we had a band meeting about this, post taking some updated band photos this week, and it's now just a question of how to release it, we are aiming to have Repeat out before the end of the year. If there's anyone out there who's cheap and knows how to PR hit us up!

What's next for the band?

Once there's a hard date for releasing the rest of the EP we're going to be heading straight back to writing & recording. We've penciled in some diy sessions for a couple of tracks and are looking at dates for some more proper studio time. The plan is for next year to really make up for the lack of releases in the past two, so watch this space!

Lastly, who should we be listening to on the local scene?

I've heard there may be some new 72% in the works which I'm very excited about. I've also heard some early mixes of the new Oscillator stuff which is sounding really fucking good!

Utopia Development Corporation will be playing the A Void Collective Winter Solstice event at the Black Prince on the 21st of December
utopiadevelopmentcorporation.bandcamp.com/

Marabar Caves

local treasures

our writers share their thoughts on the long serving local rockers

Everyone will say this but it's always great to see Bill and Tony down the front on any given night, dancing and sweating buckets. They're great advocates for the local scene. (AS)

I feel for the other half of Marabar Caves, so utterly overshadowed by Bill and Tony. It must be like being in U2 if you're Adam Clayton or Larry Mullen Jnr.
When I first moved to Northampton a couple of years ago, it was Bill and Tony who I noticed at practically every gig, down the front, dancing like it was still 1979. They're as much part of the make-up of this town as Alan Moore, Alex Novak, or the lift tower. The Caves, as a band, are just the kind of good time rock and roll every scene needs. (AB)

They're even older than me yet have more energy on stage and dancefloor than a teenager on meth. Hate them both equally [/ jk]. (ST)

I don't think I have met any musicians that are more supportive than the Marabar Caves. They were some of the first people to support me when I began playing with Skumgutta. Bill and Tony would always be the moshpit instigators at my gigs! However, they are also fantastic musicians and write some of the best rock n roll music you'll hear in Northampton! Honestly, the best way to experience their music is to see them play live - it is hard to resist the urge to get up and shake your ass! (LS)

My first experience of The Marabar Caves was at an A Void Collective gig at The Lab. What struck me was the huge amount of energy and the professionalism of the band. They instantly connected with the audience and got everyone up dancing, but they looked so relaxed and were clearly having the best time themselves. It was so uplifting. Since then I've got to know Bill and Tony and they are such a recognisable feature in the Northampton music world. If there's a gig worth watching Bill and Tony will be there dancing and chatting with everyone, firmly cementing their space in the local scene. They are thoroughly good guys who are so supportive of local artists and I have to say that any opportunity to see them play is an absolute joy. Their energy and enthusiasm just beams through and you'll leave with a smile on your face and a sense of connection to a band that is an intrinsic part of the Northampton music scene. (CBS)

TEN REASONS WE LOVE **PISS SHIVERS**

1. They're spectacularly anti-career. Their Facebook page is a personal account, they have no Instagram, and that name isn't going to help them get on Radio One.

2. They're understatement personified. Everything appears effortless, as if those songs always existed. No huge end-of-set blow outs for Piss Shivers, they just stop playing and walk off stage.

3. While they could surf their stellar CV, they don't. And that's just cool.

4. There's a perverse joy to be had in the fact that an accomplished drummer like Jonny Mattocks has replaced himself with a Korg Mini Pops drum machine.

5. Their guitarist Steve wears shorts on stage, and he's a lovely bloke who always seems to be smiling.

6. In fact the whole band seem to find a real joy in playing, and don't try to hide it.

7. The aforementioned drum machine is testament to the idea that great music and art grows out of self-imposed limitations.

8. They made a video that gave every appearance of having been filmed at the Red Lion Truck Stop on the Weedon Road.

9. Obliterate the Dark is a remarkable song, simultaneously breezy and moody, like the Velvet Underground covering Sound and Vision by Bowie.

10. Their embrace of the subtle makes their sudden explosions of volume when playing live all the more effective.

photo by Alex Botten

Meet **Helen Verrill**

What has your experience of the Northampton scene been like?
It's a very diverse, creative place with a lot going on and the reason I decided to stay here 30 years ago after Uni. There are more opportunities to be creative and meet other creatives across the board here than in many other towns.

Be honest, who are you influenced by?
The best compliment I ever had was being described as a cross between Katie Bush and Jake Thackery. Lyrics are very important to me especially if they are humorous or comment on society. I have always loved the great singer-songwriters from the 60s onwards such as Joni Mitchel, Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. Apart from Joni and Kate my other favourite female role model is Tori Amos as a musician and human being .

What's the best thing you've done to date?
Two charity gigs. One way back to raise money for innocent civilians during the Irac bombings, way back in the early 2000s, and another to raise money for mental health and homelessness in around 2017. Also setting up Sisters of Song at the Lab. A showcase for female original singer-songwriters .

Are you from a marginalised group?
Considering women are 52 percent of the population, we are marginalised, which is why I set up Sisters of Song. I think it's getting better though. I have been subjected to sexism and boys club behaviour at the early open mikes I went to, and have been patronised in music shops to the extent I felt uncomfortable going there. I have also been heckled and put down by older men a few times just for having the nerve to be on stage. My response is to write songs about them and the people that encourage them such as Donald Trump. Luckily I have many supportive male musician friends who have helped me overcome these knock backs.

What's coming up next?
I want to perform more with my piano rather than my guitar. It is my first instrument just not as portable. I have been writing and adapting songs for piano, only performing them at open mic nights so far but hoping to bring them to gigs.

Which other bands are you enjoying at the moment?
My new favourite fun band is Wet Leg, who remind me of being in my 20s, and the songwriter Jesse Welles, who in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, writes satirical yet touching lyrics about the state of America. Unlike Bob Dylan, he went from electric to acoustic and appears to be committed to protest songs.

Helen Verrill plays The Lab on the 27th of November

MOON HAZE

Kobie fills us in.

You've changed a lot in the time since a couple of us saw you at the Black Prince a couple of years ago, and you pulled all your early music off streaming. How would you describe the change and what drove it?

We pulled our early music from streaming as we felt it wasn't a good representation of us anymore, it was very rushed and rough since it was for a college project.
We think there are many factors behind what drove our change and honestly, it comes down to us progressing as musicians and the lineup changing brought in different playing styles and helped drive the band in a heavier more aggressive sounding direction, which is where we really wanted to take it.

You play a lot in MK, but not often in Northampton, why is that?

Ideally, we would love to play in both places equally as much, but it all comes down to finding gigs in the area. We have had some difficulty with our outreach to venues in NN, but we put on great shows and pack a punch! Hopefully, with your help, this'll be the boost we need to get our name out there!

What are your goals as a band?

Our goals as a band are to take this as far as we possibly can. Success for us would be getting signed to a major label, that would truly be a dream come true.

What would your dream gig be?

A dream gig? That's a difficult question, I think the dream gig would be to play at a big festival like Download or in a big venue like the O2. Even something as simple as opening for a band that we love!

What's next for Moon Haze?

Next from us we've got some new music coming to you! Once this zine is out our newest single, "Told You So", will be out and ready for everyone to listen to but keep your eyes peeled as we've got plenty more coming your way!

Why Tribute and Cover Bands Can Get in the Sea

Alex Botten explains why he has no time for copyists and grave robbers

Recently, I came across the Instagram account @shitoasistributebands, a page dedicated to collecting the very worst of Oasis tribute acts. Yes, technically, all Oasis tribute acts are the worst, due to the raw material they have to work with; boorish, laddish, meat-and-two-veg-stodge lumpen rock music of the most venal kind, fronted by two absolute wankers, but it's amazing how some people can take even these unpromising building blocks and create something so fucking dreadful that they make the OG Oasis look like Slint. The Instagram account is brilliant, post after post of dismal morons churning out 'Roll With It' or 'Live Forever' to audiences of dullards. It's pretty much the only thing that's good about tribute acts.

Tribute acts are a weird thing, aren't they? I suppose they started with people slavishly copying The Beatles, and The Buggs were possibly the very first, emerging in the mid-60s. But it goes back before then, to Buddy Ocha and his Elvis impersonations. The obsession with pop stars in that era partly explains why they emerged, but by the 70s they were falling out of favour, as they should have. According to the surprisingly interesting article (at least until it starts justifying dickheads) at https://www.protributebands.com/complete-history-of-tribute-bands/ they were seen as nothing more than rip-off merchants, playing off the talent of others.

Why?

And that's where it should have ended, with the terminally-unimaginative being relegated to the nostalgia bin of history. Tribute acts should have been something looked back on in those "I love the 1970s" shows they used to have (perhaps it's time to bring out a show reminiscing about those? Stuart MacConie talking fondly about "I Love the 70s" in an episode of "I Love 'I Love the 70s'"). But no, they didn't stop, and now we have the worst of all worlds, where even extant bands like Pendulum have a tribute to them.

I know there's the argument that tribute acts allow punters to see the music they love live, but the truth is they don't. If you're paying to see Stereophonies you're just watching some random twats play covers of Stereophonics songs. Tribute acts are a solution to a problem tribute acts have convinced venues and concerts goers exists. In the past, if you missed your favourite band that was that, and that's still the case, but now these money grubbing charlatans are stepping in and selling eager halfwits a facsimile of the experience.

Tribute acts are the middle management of rock - convincing everyone they're essential, while knowing the world would be just fine if they vanished overnight. You know when your office manager is on leave and everything is actually better? They're like that, but playing "Dakota".

Cover bands are even worse, though. While I can kind of see the point of Nirvana UK recreating the sounds of a long-gone band, or Beatles tributes bringing them back to life (full transparency: Nirvana UK's drummer is a pal and former bandmate of mine, and another friend is a successful Paul McCartney from Glasgow, a Paul McMcCartney, if you will), cover acts are the lowest of the low. Yes, we all start out in our very first band learning a few covers, but we don't expect pubs to pay us to play them night after night. Yet there they are, filling community pubs, bands with names like "Nuclear Blast! (playing the hits of Foo Fighters, Stereophonics, The Killers, and Green Day)" or "Chunked Up, Cops (playing the hits of Green Day, The Killers, Stereophonics, and Foo Fighters)". They sweep in, play their identical sets, and landlords (eager to keep making money, understandably) book them again in preference to original acts. They effectively kill the venue as a place for original acts to play, turning it into a Zombie venue. Keen to keep finding new income streams "Piledriver! (playing the hits of The Killers, Foo Fighters, Stereophonics, and Green Day)" book a show at a venue that has previously hosted original acts, at which point the landlord realises he makes more money off a room of pissed up aunts and Reform voters bellowing along to "Good Riddance (Time Of Your Life)" than from pale, interesting indie kids nursing one half of cider for the whole evening and nodding along to a bunch of NEU!-inspired twenty somethings showcasing their latest fiendishly complex microtonal 20 minute epic. Another venue gone to the cancer of cover bands.

To make it worse, both of these parasites get paid a load of money to play other people's songs. Sickening.

The only justification, the only thing I want to see, is bands that slam two acts together. Beatallica (playing the hits of the Beatles in a Metallica style), or Elvana (Elvis fronting Nirvana), or Irie Maiden (Reggae Iron Maiden), or Aero-Smiths (Morrissey re-enaction fronting a band doing Smiths songs in the style of Aerosmith - USP: throws out chocolate to the audience). I've only made two of those up. The point is, if you're going to rob a grave for your music, or pick the pockets of the still living, at least have the good manners to bring something new to the party. I have no desire to see "Feederz (Authentically Recreating the Tones and Sights of 'Comfort in Sound' era Feeder)" or "Dollar Mighty (playing the hits of Foo Fighters, The Killers, Green Day and Stereophonics)" ever again.

TL:DR? Tribute and cover bands can simply fuck off.

IF YOU'RE READING THIS, IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Building a Better World in Community

Mike Lawrence from Blackbird Community Project writes

"What does the town YOU want to live in look like?"

Blackbird Community Project is a Northampton-based group started in 2021. Post-Covid we looked at the state of things and saw one clear need - community.
People say, “Years ago, everyone knew everyone", who to trust, who to avoid. Realistically, that wasn't true across the board, but wouldn't it be better?
The pandemic proved we need community. Shopping for the elderly, feeding the homeless, running online sessions for parents, fundraisers, and so much more.

Times are tough. People can't afford things they need, and hate politics is making gains everywhere. But the good news is this: A strong community is the best antidote to fascism. It couldn't be more simple. We can make our neighbourhoods inhospitable to hate with fun events like music and sports, building relationships, and promoting local initiatives.

THREE WAYS TO FIGHT FASCISM

1. (Culture) If everyone knows everyone, hate can't breathe.
Hate thrives when we’re cut off. The algorithm over-represents the bad and under-represents the good. We need real experiences, community-building on a budget, but how? Northampton is home to many veterans of this field! Local scholar Tré Ventour-Griffiths interviewed elder Afro-Caribbean Northamptonians who cited house-parties, home-meetings, big one-off gigs and many ongoing small get-togethers.
These can build a base-level of trust. And besides, if you know the whole neighbourhood, at least you know where the truly unreachable racists are!

2. (Activity & Immediacy) No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.
Racism is spilling like an oil slick right now, and if we don’t sow seeds of solidarity, it will pollute Northampton too. It matters to spread de-escalation skills, first-aid, self-defence, because the actual 'first-responders' are usually normal people, instead of emergency services.
We’ve done it before, we’ll do it again. In under two days, hundreds of us mobilised to fend off the racists on Kettering Road in August 2024. And in between, we’ll keep building Culture and Infrastructure.
Grow your phonebook like your life depends on it, you will be amazed by what’s possible when we get used to calling on each other.
“THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE DARING” – Emma Goldman

3. (Infrastructure) Ownership = autonomy.
Some minority communities build integrity by investing in each other. The general rule being; we become independent by paying friends and family. In time, this can lower our living costs. Food, household materials, construction, repairs, childcare etc. Essentials can become reliable income and fund the family's needs; setting up businesses, investing in education, property or more. With ownership, anything is possible.

The best time to start building resilient communities was 30 years ago; the second-best time is right now ;)
If you're reading this, it's not too late.

Mike Lawrence, Organiser 19/10/25

Blackbird are hosting 'Nature Knows No Kings - resistance, poetry, and music', headlined by Mum and Dad Talk To Animals on the 14th of November at The Lab, 7pm documentary, music from 8pm.

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A Void Collective Presents: AVCD Volume 1

Sub Pop 200, C86, Nuggets...The idea of the compilation album, while being historically important, represents much more. It can act as an overview of a local music scene, as an introduction to new bands, or simply as a snapshot of a moment in time. With this in mind we put together the first A Void Collective compilation and gave it away for free. Well, free in theory. The idea was to make it available in a couple of locations connected to the local scene and get people to go there and spend some money. In the case of the Lab, Northampton's best and most musically diverse venue, to go there and sign up as a member or simply buy a pint. In the case of Abington Groove, Northampton's newest record shop, to go there and buy an album or a single. Who knows if this will work or if people still have the means to play a CD but it is important to try. These places are a vital part of any community and culture is everything. We'll let you know in the next issue if the experiment was a success. In the meantime, here's a few words from the bands and artists themselves. Enjoy!

1) Dodos Appreciation Society: "Mathematical Fly Art"

“Sat one day on the sofa ... looking up at the ceiling ... I noticed a fly... it appeared to be making geometric shapes with its Aerial display ...
What are they trying to say?”

2) Maevis Darkhorse: "Adieu to Old England"

This is a traditional UK folk song, meaning it is so old that it wasn’t originally written down and was passed on and evolved through word of mouth. This also means it has no known author, and therefore it is not technically a cover— and so it escapes the ire of The Collective. It’s a prison ballad about losing all your wealth and privileges, ending up in jail, possibly about to be deported. Despite this, it has a jaunty tune. The lyrics are taken from Shirley Collins’ arrangement. Andy Hawkes mixed our version in such a way as to give it a medieval feel that I really like.

3) Piss Shivers: "Soul Surfin"

The instrumental ‘soul surfing’ was inspired by a love song written by the band with inspiration from our friend Prof....’we started on the balcony in the middle of summer, like light bulbs in time..and yet, and yet - wherever you go, there you are’

4) Marabar Caves: "Trouble"

Trouble is an autobiographical song. It is about taking advantage of every opportunity to have a good time and usually includes having a pint or two - or whatever your own poison is. Sometimes it can get a bit much but you don't want to miss out so you go anyway - and it all works out nicely again; and again, and again...

avoidcassettes.bandcamp.com/album/avcd001

elasticstage.com/avoidcassettes/releases/acvd001v-album

5) Sian Essam: "Perfect To Me"

This song came to me while I was at work one day. It went round and round my head until it was ‘Perfect to Me’. My friend, Greg helped with the chords and I sent them to my amazingly talented godfather, Matt Cowe, who was able to work out the music for it and help with the production side of things. This song is very special to me and I hope you like it!

6) Death of Summer: "Animals"

Animals started life as a demo we could shop around to promote the band and get gigs but went way beyond that, becoming a bit of a monster to record but ultimately a labour of love to finish. It was recorded in 3 locations: Big Noise Studio, Delapre Abbey and finished at Lodge Studios. While we were at Delpre Abbey, we had to halt recording one night due to Most Haunted being recorded downstairs. We also recorded our first music video for this song on the roof of Big Noise, which was cool. The experimentation we did on this track inspired us to carry on and make an album, setting us on the path we are currently on, so it's hugely important to Death of Summer. So many amazing memories!

7) ÜLV: “Citizen of Nowhere (Redux)” is a reworked and re-recorded version of the “Amplifier Mountain” album track. It’s a reaction to people who want to shag flags, and is more relevant than ever.

8) The Good Fridays: "The Void"

A song inspired by the passing of our friend and Northampton musician, Spencer Rose. As well as a personal tribute, it covers the universal theme of the loss of loved ones.
Are there signs from beyond? Wishful and unscientific? Or is there something behind mankind’s most persistent question, “Is death the end”? Either way, it’s a cracking tune with a funereal vibe to it, courtesy of the bells and us painstakingly layering our vocals to sound like Benedictine monks led by rogue nun, Sister Michaela! (Mickie Chanaz) Excellent production by Tom Drury of Very Nice Studios.

9) Joy Disposal Unit: "Danse Troupe Apocalypse"

This was intended as a jolly, punchy pop song about humanity senselessly consuming itself, completely oblivious to the world ending in flame and ruin. It’s pretty daft in that respect. We put a Wild West-sounding solo in the middle because why the fuck not?

10) Utopia Development Corporation: "Cyberpest 2020"

Cyberpest 2020 (Or, If You Think This Song Is About You, There Is Something Very Wrong) is the least radio-friendly song UDC have ever written. It's angry, and you should be too.

Meandering Through The Canyons Of Sound

Maevis Darkhorse on the magic of vinyl

Vinyl records have been around since 1930. Vinyl was the best commercially viable, mass-produced medium that captured sound and allowed it to be reproduced, so music could be experienced not-live (before that there were only radio broadcasts). Since then, other formats and means of experiencing recorded music have come and gone as sound technology has exploded. The introduction of digital music in the form of compact discs in 1982 was meant to herald the death of vinyl. Yet 40 odd years later, still it survives. How is this possible? What is the appeal of this dinosaur format?

One of the sexiest things about vinyl is it's physicality. It mechanically causes sound, by the shape of the groove acting on the stylus; either side of the groove each creating a separate sound channel. When the master disc is being cut, the recorded sound input causes the groove to be cut in that particular pattern, so subsequent pressings, when played, reverse this process. You can see the variation in the surface of the disc. Delia Derbyshire could look at a record and know where the horn section was going to come in just by looking at the nature of the groove pattern. Because of the relative simplicity of vinyl, you can do weird things with it; like scratching and mixing. Like playing it backwards to hear hidden messages from the Devil. Like using a £20 note to play it; the corner of the note acting as the stylus, the rest of the note amplifying the sound (so someone at The Lab reliably informed me). Personally I find it mind blowing that all the complexities of music can be reproduced in this way – if you think of orchestral music, for example, and the number of instruments involved and the variations in tone and pitch of them; to capture all that in a groove and relive it again via a little spike of diamond – awesome.

Of course it has it's downsides; the fragility of vinyl, if you're not careful with it. Scratches, crackles and pops, the build up of dust, the warping if it's not stored properly (with the advent of CDs, the boast was of a clean, pure sound from a disc that was indestructible... although the robustness of CDs proved not to be quite what we were led to believe). The fact that cats like to sharpen their claws down the spines of the covers FFS!? Then there is the inconvenience of vinyl, the large size, the faff of having to turn it over halfway through, that you can't play it in your car.

When MP3s and streaming came along, that pretty much did for CD sales as well. But vinyl has endured and now outsells CDs. Why is that? For one thing, a lot of people prefer the sound of vinyl; it's warmth and richness & dynamism, making digital sound somewhat lifeless & sterile in comparison. There is something about a vinyl record, the all-round package, the larger artwork not behind a plastic window, the sleeve notes. Perhaps it's a nostalgia thing, a backlash against digital technology and all-too-convenient, soullessness of streaming. If you think of an album as a chunk of time that musicians have dedicated their life to creating, owning a physical copy of that work seems to me, to honour and appreciate their efforts more. Personally, if I've invested in buying a record, I pay more attention, make more of an effort to play it, and value it more, than if I have a long list of tracks from a streaming platform to chose from. It's a different listening experience. Vinyl is more of an art form. Vinyl is collectable. Recording artistes release limited edition, coloured vinyl for a reason.

So what's it like to have a vinyl collection? How do you catalogue it? Alphabetically, by artist? By genre? For me, a piece of music reminds me of that time in my life when it came along, or when I first heard it. So I catalogue it accordingly. When I hear an album again after a gap, it takes me straight back, like a time machine. Pavement ~ Slanted & Enchanted? Bristol, 1992. Sleaford Mods ~ Spare Ribs? Bugbrooke, 2021 (orange vinyl!). Shopping for vinyl is a lovely experience. Wherever I have lived, I had my regular haunts. Spin-A-Disc, upstairs, in Abington Street, Revolver in Bristol, Warp Records in Sheffield. Blissful times spent flipping through racks of vinyl, searching for the latest obscurity I'd just heard on the radio. Nowadays we have Record Store Day, twice a year in independent record shops, with live bands playing, keeping the spirit of vinyl alive and kicking.

One final quirk of vinyl: you can play it at a variety of speeds, as John Peel famously did on his radio shows, on a regular basis. Myself, after a night on the cider, in my Bristol days, fancied a bit of Wish You Were Here. Twenty minutes in, my housemate banged on my door. "If you're going to play it at that volume, could you at least play it at the right speed?!" Sorry Richard. Pink Floyd fans get so easily offended, no?

Looking Back on 2025

Alex Botten reflects on the first year of the Collective

When Andrew Slack and I first discussed the problem of getting gigs in Northampton if you're outside of the 'standard' for bands, I had no idea that a year later we'd have done so much. Back then, it was simply so we could have some shows to play, as it felt like our bands were being ignored by some of the town's promoters. The idea rapidly grew, as we realised we could do a lot more than just put on gigs, taking a more diversity-oriented direction as time went on. We wanted to put on gigs the way we wished they were run, shows with clear guidance from the organiser, support for the acts on the night, and giving value to the venues as well. Even something as small as telling a band that has never played The Lab before where the toilets are seemed important.
We booked a show, with ÜLV, The Keepers, Joy Disposal Unit, and Shooting At Fires, and went about publicising it, hoping we'd get a decent crowd but fearing no one would turn up. On the night, the room gradually filled up, and by the time Jordan from The Keepers was leading a call and response from the top of the bar, the audience was more than big enough for the Lab to happily have us back.
The same thing happened at the next show, and the next, and before we really had time to think about it, we were running the alternative stage at the Solstice Festival in Upton, with a rather fantastic backdrop built by Timber Club.
From that point on, despite my ever-present worry that *this* show is going to be the one where the wheels fall off, we've managed to get enough people in to make it work. Even a paid event at the Black Prince didn't lose any money!

Some things we tried have worked, others haven't. Right at the start, we thought a podcast before each gig would be good, and recorded short interviews with the bands playing our first show. I'd done podcasts before, and some had been moderately successful, so I thought this would work brilliantly. In some ways, it did - the bands certainly seemed to like doing them, but they weren't good enough to keep up with them, and no one seemed to notice when we ditched the idea after the first show. What unexpectedly hit were the little 40-second interviews I started doing outside the Lab on the night of each gig.
Then there's this zine. It was suggested as something that might be good, could get a little bit of extra info about the bands out there, but it's grown way beyond what I would have thought possible, and has become an integral part of the whole A Void thing. If anything, this zine has become as important as the gigs, and I think it possibly has more impact on the local scene.
What do we have planned for the second year? We'll be hosting our first anniversary show in February, and going bi-monthly with the zine (to avoid oversaturation and writer burnout). In May, we'll be joining forces with The Lab, Performing Room, and Audio Works (with a helping hand from Picky and NLP) to put on a brand new three-day music festival (possibly foolishly, we're intending to run two stages simultaneously at the Lab each night).
We've also started A Void Cassettes, and will (hopefully) be releasing the first three tapes before the end of the year. We've also put out the first CD compilation, making it free for anyone who wants to pick it up.

At the end of the day, anyone could have chosen to do what we've done; they just didn't.

Songs of Christmas Future

Andrew Slack on those songs that play from early November right up to the end of the year.

It's that time of year again when those of us of a less festive mindset can look forward to being subjected to a barrage of saccharine, overly nostalgic and above all unrealistic Christmas songs. "The Most wonderful time of the year"? Is it though? "I wish it could be Christmas everyday"? Have you thought this through? "We're simply having a wonderful Christmas time"? There's nothing simple about it, Paul.

It's even worse for the poor sods who work in retail. They get it from early November and in a much stronger dose; the same trite playlist looping several times over the course of an 8 hour shift. I've only recently escaped this hell myself and have the psychological scars to prove it; a form of Mariah Carey induced PTSD that will probably require therapy somewhere down the line.

For this reason I have a bittersweet relationship with the festive period. There's a great line in the 1980s classic black comedy, 'Gremlins' where Phoebe Cates' character perfectly sums up the dual nature of Christmas, bleakly observing that for every person opening a present, there's another opening their wrists. This kind of humour has always struck a chord with me and I want more of it in the songs we are forced to listen to every year. Sure, we've got Fairytale of New York but we've also got the sausage roll song. A tinge of darkness, not 'The Darkness' if you know what I mean. This is the reason why many of us felt such joy when Rage Against the Machine ruined Simon Cowell's Christmas in 2009. But as much as I like 'Killing in the Name', I've always thought that every year there should be a cull of so called 'Christmas' songs. The ones that have overstayed their welcome and are tenuous in their festivity at best. I'd happily lose the Flying Pickets and Jona Lewie if it meant we would no longer have to hear East 17. A bell on the track, some fake snow and a bunch of twats in puffer jackets does not a Christmas song make. Get in the bin, son's of Walthamstow, Christmas is cancelled.

Anyway, for those of you who never got what you wanted, or had to work on Christmas day, I present to you the A Void Collective Alternative Christmas playlist. What's that? Only four songs?! Christmas can be like that sometimes. Tinged with disappointment and an endless yearning. Joyeaux Noel!

Murder City Devils '364 Days'

Always a band with an appreciation for seamier side of life, 364 Days taps into the flip side of Christmas; anticipation, excess, regret, lonliness, bullshit- it's all here in a ballad about St Nicholas.

Raveonettes 'The Christmas Song'

Another underrated song with a timeless quality to it. In an alternative universe it's easy to imagine this in rotation alongside The Crystals and Darlene Love

The Fall 'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing'

A rancorous take on the traditional carol, delivered by post-punk bad Santa, Mark E Smith. Smith slurs and the band play a jaunty tune. Perfect. The line "Veiled in flesh" has never sounded so weird.

Fleet Foxes 'White Winter Hymnal'

Beautiful, haunting and perfect for winter walks. Another one from an alternative timeline. If sound were colour this song would be red and white.

REVIEWS

We take a look at new work from Shoetown artists & bands

LIVE

The Venus Fly Trap

The Black Prince, 18th October, 2025

photo Alex Botten

Across a career spanning almost 40 years, the Venus Fly Trap's sole constant member Alex Novak has maintained a steadfast commitment to sci-fi-and-sleaze drenched motorik rock music. Tonight's performance, supposedly a launch gig for the new single "Bebe" (perversely unplayed), is no great departure, being practically a greatest hits set. And why not? The current duo line up of the band, with long serving sidekick Andy Denton on guitar, is a precise and honed machine, delivering those hits with razor sharpness.
Prowling the stage like a cross between "Achtung Baby!" era Bono and Peter Capaldi's version of the Doctor, Alex performs to a back room in Northampton as if he were on stage at Wembley. The uplighting and smoke on stage give the whole thing the feeling of a fire and brimstone religious sermon, and the calls for more from the audience seems to catch the band unaware, causing a hasty reconnection of mics.
A triumphant performance by a band that should be treated like a national treasure. (AB)

SINGLES

Dead Leaves *"Amina"*
Dead Leaves' debut single is a refreshing change from the current crop of outfits attempting to revive screamo clogging up local venues all over the region. "Amina" is a melodic gem, with purposeful 'proper' singing, guitars that are controlled rather than chaotic, and an actual tune. A reference point for where they're coming from would possibly be the way groups like Throneberry emerged in the '90s as a reaction to the over-saturation of grunge. Once a style becomes too prevalent, musicians tend to react the other way, and it looks like we're headed that way again, thank god.

Harry Mockett *"Home To Me"*
Hyper-specific local references meet a slightly wonky pop song with a video that accidentally summons the spirit of David Brent on at least two occasions. Will either vanish completely or end up being a big success, seeing kids for Belfast to Bangalore singing along to lyrics about Sixfields and local buses.

Weesy *"Drag Me Away"*
"Journey of the Sorcerer" meets "Wanted (Dead Or Alive)" in an understated 3 minutes of dustbowl dry Americana. The slide guitar creaks, the vocals are a world weary sigh, and the result is a song that wouldn't sound out of place on Red Red Meat's classic "Bunny Gets Paid".

Kieran Stowell *"Rough Ideas"*
Possessing a touch of the Tom Waits, Johnny Cash, and even Marianne Faithful exhausted grit in the vocals, the new single from Kieran Stowell is a quiet reflection on themes of defeat with a tracery of hope running through it. It's like one of those cups you see that's been broken and then repaired with gold; still functional, still technically broken, but maintaining its integrity in the face of adversity.

Cheap Bleach *"D.O.A."*
"D.O.A." gallops out of the gate with a blast of finely polished emo pop punk. During the 2 minute 43 second runtime, the band hits all the expected markers - hollered vocals, palm-mutted chugging, double kick drum, group shouting, drop just before the chorus, stereo tom panning, moment of respite about a third in to allow more introspection before a full-throttle return to the previous blasting with a guitar solo under the final vocal. Textbook. What they lack in originality, they make up for in sheer energy, and if you like this kind of thing you'll love "D.O.A."

Moon Haze *"Told You So"*
Who would have thought the rather tentative band we saw playing sub-All About Eve goth two years ago would drop a tribute to Iron Maiden's 'Run to the Hills' in the middle of their latest single? "Told You So" is a pummelling slice of metal with a chorus that'll get stuck in your head. Moon Haze have nailed that thing where a song has the chorus melody as the intro, even if they could do with mixing the bass a little higher. Great stuff, and a vast improvement on their earlier material.

Megaphoney *"On The Run"*
Ever wondered what Matt Bellamy singing a Bond theme would sound like? Well wonder no longer, as here's Megaphoney aka Peter Marchant, to show you! It's actually pretty great, and points at a post Phantom Isle career for Peter that is extremely promising. Hope the management have Amazon (007's new home) on the line.

ALBUMS

Nobody's Secret "*Serpent*"
Featuring some members (former members?) of the incredibly peculiar One Way Ticket, Nobody's Secret (despite an equally uninspiring name) are on another level to their previous/other band. Where One Way Ticket were (sad to say) a mess; visually all over the place with songs that couldn't decide if they wanted to be Slayer or Sugarbabes lumbered with mixes so indescribably weird that they were virtually unlistenable, Nobody's Secret are just *better*, with a group style firmly on point. The playing is bang on, the mix impressive, and the songs on this 6 track mini album showcase a supremely confident quintet. The music itself is straightforward enough rock/grunge but everything is so well constructed you're going to enjoy your 18 minutes whether or not Nobody's Secret are your usual bag.

3Point *"Kingmaker"*
Imagine a world where Tunng, The Streets, Simon Bookish, Massive Attack and Venetian Snares all decided to make an album. There's the understated vocal delivery and kitchen sink poetry of Mikes Lindsay and Skinner, the literary references of Leo Chadburn, the flow of 3D, and occasional bursts of Aaron Funk's whomp whomp drum and bass. Jayk, aka 3Point, really needs to sort out syncing rights asap, as it would be a crime if the title track didn't show up in a particularly moody scene in the next screen appearance of Luther.
It's not all noir-tinged gloom, though; there's some levity and "Out of My League" could be a Daði Freyr album track.
"Kingmaker" is night music, designed for early hours driving through empty city streets, or post-club comedown in a hushed living room. File alongside your Portishead albums.
Kingmaker is released in December

Julius Seizure "*Anomie*"
If you've been to our events at the Lab, you may have seen Cannock's own Julius Seizure as one of two of the five acts that didn't pull out of the 5th AVC event with just days to spare (*now now, no bitterness! Ed.*) Not only did he sucessfully turn up for the gig, he brought with him a set of thug-rock bangers that resulted in a most unexpected audience singalong.
"Anomie" is his new album, but it also serves as a kind of greatest-hits-to-date of the first incarnation of the band (because it is a band, his name isn't Julius, it's Louis). All the hits are there, presented in that half barked, half sung, impossible to ignore voice. We recently saw a video where some arsehole in the audience shouted 'you can't sing!' just as Julius started up a track, not only was this uncalled for and cruel, it was not true. Julius can sing, but maybe not in the way that your Reform voting aunt with the bad perm would like. Fuck her, and fuck anyone who feels it necessary to go after anyone who is different. "Anomie" rocks, and we'd much rather be listening to it than Billy Lockett.

LIVE
Oscillator
The Lab, 9th of October, 2025

photo Alex Botten

You would not want to be the band going on after Oscillator, no matter who you are. After a line-up and name change moved them from the more psychedelic Gonzo Experimental Band, the trio of Charlie in bass and vocals, Tom on drums, and Jake on guitar are simply unstoppable.
Playing to a packed-out Thursday night crowd at The Lab, Oscillator pummelled the audience for nearly 40 minutes with a relentless and danceable set melding almost-techno and disco to noise rock guitars. Vocals alternated between wordless croons and barked commands, while the drums maintained a constant rock-solid beat that had the attendees, right up to the front of the stage, dancing with wild abandon (matched almost by Charlie's relentless grooving).
Wreathed in smoke, the band sometimes vanished completely behind a haze of light and fog, only their shadows visible. A superb mix by engineer Jazmine only added to the perfection of Oscillator's performance.
I honestly believe there isn't a live band that could touch them, not even Maquina or A Place To Bury Strangers (with whom they share some DNA), and having heard some of their recordings, I know this is going to translate onto vinyl.
Oscillator are going to be massive, mark my words. (AB)

House of Cats "Four Weeks EP"

Andrew Slack listens to the debut release from the new husband and wife duo, and speaks to bassist Cheryl Botten-Smith

House of Cats debut EP is a living, breathing thing. What started as a means by which Alex Botten could teach his wife Cheryl the rudiments of bass guitar has evolved into a three song epic. Opening track 'Here We Come' is both mission statement and proof-of-concept, with a rumbling, fuzzed-out bass providing a backdrop for the spidery, delay-heavy guitar lines to scurry over. It's like a marriage of Reptile House-era Sisters of Mercy, Ennio Morriconie and the theme from Get Carter. Great stuff. Second track 'Salt Letter' is a continuation of the ideas of the opener, a droning, brooding comedown anthem that would give even Spacemen 3 pause for thought. Indeed this and the following song have a combined run time of about 25 minutes so fans of the two and a half minute pop song need not apply. They'd be missing out though, as closing track, the titular 'Four Weeks', is the best of the bunch. Sounding like a guitar heavy OMD during their Architecture and Morality phase, the song possesses a transcendent lightness; the bass has been cleaned up and is more prominent in the mix, as Alex's plaintive vocal drifts in and out before scattering amidst squalls of guitar. There is beauty and hope here, whereas the previous song suggested a grim march towards the inevitable. A very promising debut EP, and a fascinating insight into the development of a musician across its three tracks.

A Void sat down with bassist Cheryl to discuss the challenges of being a new musician.

It's certainly impressive to go from never having played bass to being a recording artist within 4 weeks. What has the experience been like?

It has been such good fun. Alex joked about me playing music with him, so we had a mess around on one of his basses and I loved it. It then gave me the excuse to buy my very beautiful, burgundy mist Harley Benton as a first guitar and from then on I was hooked!

I'm all for playing three notes, sometimes two, for extended periods of time. How long until you sell out and add a forth note to your repertoire?

I'll have you know that I'm up to 6 on 'Four Weeks', and working across three strings. I'm pretty proud of that in just a month of playing but I'm also a big fan of the repetitive bass lines (well for now anyway)

Also please tell me you'll always use a plectrum and never play slap bass?

Haha, I promise! I have a purple plectrum to match my bass so I'm all in on the plectrum front!

Joking aside, there is a noticeable progression to you playing across the EP. What are your thoughts on this?

I feel that I've gained in confidence as I've gone along. I have been keen to learn new things and Alex is a great teacher in introducing new skills, like playing across strings or introducing different patterns within a song and I've loved it. I have been practising most days as well which has really helped. I still have a long, long way to go but having something tangible to take away, through recorded songs is such a motivator.

Are there any ambitions of playing live?

I don't necessarily have any urgent desire to perform in public, as I'm naturally a bit of a wallflower, but once I've got my confidence up, you never know!

Would you find this more or less nerve wracking than recording?

A billion times more... and then some!

Do you take inspiration from other bass players?

I'm a massive fan of The Cure, so Simon Gallup would be my number one.

That was the correct answer. 4 Weeks is available now on Bandcamp.

<<<REWIND

We look back at some notable Northampton releases from the past

The Departure *"Dirty Words"*

It's been 20 years since Northampton's The Departure released their major label debut, and what turned out to be their only album. Pushed hard at the time by Parlophone, and parachuted into a series of unearned high-profile support slots (The Killers, Duran Duran, even Placebo at Wembley, FFS), listening back two decades later, it's very hard to work out what the label were thinking when they signed the band a mere six months after forming. Meticulous production can't do anything to hide the paucity of ideas and lack of originality. The songs are all vaguely frantically melodic, hinting at a band attempting to be U2, Coldplay, Franz Ferdinand, The Libertines, and even David Bowie all at the same time. Frankly, it's bloody exhausting to listen to, with the guitars starting to take on an icepick-to-the-ears quality around the mid-point, while the vocals are an irritatingly mannered sub-Starman whine throughout.
Reviews at the time were mixed, with even the positive ones not managing to muster much more than an "It's ok, but..." shrug.
Three years later, it was over, and probably no one other than the band and an embarrassed A&R man noticed. While some albums can be re-appraised with the benefit of hindsight, "Dirty Words" is not one of them. It was shit in 2005, and it's shit now. (AB)

Spacemen 3 "*Recurring*"

There are breakup albums and there are 'breakup' albums. Spacemen 3's final album is the latter. By the time the album was released the band had split and the individual compositions by founding members Pete Kember and Jason Pierce could be found sleeping on separate sides of the tracklist. Kember's songs make up the first half of the record and include the incredible Big City (Everybody I Know Can Be Found Here), a euphoric slice of electronica that really needs to be heard in its full length version to be truly appreciated. Side B is pure Jason Pierce and offers a glipse of what would become Spiritualised. If ever you needed someone to write an album called 'Now That's What I Call Dignitas, Volume 1', or 'Songs to be Wheeled Down a Long White Corridor To', Pierce would be your man. Overall there is an air of 'making do' about the album, and it occasionally feels like an anthology or a collection of outtakes, but it holds together and is a fitting end to an important band.
Also of note is the excellent cover of Mudhoney's "When Tomorrow Hits", available on the CD version. There's a funny story about how the planned split single between the two bands never happened because Mudhoney annoyed Kember by changing the lyrics to "Revolution" to include a line about a methadone suppository. (AS)

LIVE

Attila the Stockbroker

The Lab, 23rd of October, 2025

Atilla the Stockbroker playing tonight
At the Lab and he waived his fee
Promoting struggling venues
With financial difficulties

40 years plus of performance
A well of political rhymes
Opposing ideas of the far right
These verses still chime with the times

He performs with a beer in his hand
A mandola to strum for his songs
Two sets of wit and anger
Still fire in his belly and tongue

From punk support act to writer
Spent all of his active stage life
Calling out working class Tories
And tabloids... with a nod to his wife

To the listening ear it's heartening
Confirming class war is still on
Rambling memories and highlights
Love for football from sunny Brighton

The Stockbroker targets his enemies
Imposing alone on the stage
Strident, a blaspheming hedge priest
There're decades still left of this rage
(RH)

Art & Neurodiversity: What's Strong with You?

Kieran Stowell looks at the impact of neurodivergance on creatives

If you have so much as caught a passing glance at the news, even if through the gaps in your fingers as you try to shelter yourself from it, you may have heard of the unfounded claims from a certain world leader, that autism is caused by the ingestion of paracetamol by expecting mothers.
I am not writing this article to explain the level of absurdity of these claims, as it should be blindingly obvious, and anyone who has a modicum of doubt about this, will have stopped reading at this point.
However, once again, I cannot help but feel frustrated by the loudly vocalised narrative by such small, minded thinking, that being Neurodiverse is a curse, a branding caused by negligent parenting, in which those who have been marked, are destined to be nothing more than an inept being, whose role in society is just to be a burden to others.
Neurodivergence is not something to be cured or prevented, but rather to be accepted and celebrated, as there are many people, who despite the amount of suffering they have experienced at the hands of both their neurodivergence and an uneducated society, have found ways to cope and even thrive.
I was diagnosed with High Functioning Autism in my mid 20's, and whilst it has provided a sense context and clarity for who I am and my experiences with life so far, it has also been the source of a lot of loneliness and frustration.

Naturally, with the spaces inside my head, often being as loud and manic as a bag of cats, I have always turned to music as a way of finding comfort and in a strange form of irony; peace and quiet.
My wife calls this "tunnel vision" as when I am writing, performing, or listening to music, I tend to tune out what's around me.
This comes with both pros and cons, for example, I hardly become nervous when performing on stage, as I focus solely on the performance, rather than my surroundings.
However, it is such fixations, which make me overly critical of my own work, at times, resulting in periods of procrastination, caused by a fear of failure.
However, it is my recent fixation on this news article, mixed with the ruminations on the

relationship I have with my own neurodiversity and art, that has had me considering about others, I have recently met, whose experiences and struggles with their own Neurodiversity have similarly shaped their relationship to the art they create.

After being diagnosed as autistic 2 years ago, A Void Collective's very own Alex Botten (52) had the following to say about his diagnosis and how it has impacted the music he creates.

'Getting diagnosed was a relief and has helped me understand myself far better, and I'm lucky that my wife has spent her career around people with autism, so embraced that side of me.'

'Musically, it has caused some barriers, I'm terrible at networking because I don't want to be a pain or a bother. I also find playing gigs at new places a struggle, as I much prefer familiarity.'

'Nights not running to schedule can also be an issue. At a show back in February, the promoter had such a lax attitude towards time keeping, the band playing before us didn't start until 5 minutes before we were due on.

This caused me a lot of anxiety, and when they over ran by 10 minutes beyond their allocated set time, it caused me to have an autistic meltdown on stage and cut our set to just three songs.'

For Autistic people, the slightest change in a pre-arranged schedule, can make the difference between their day being manageable or it being a complete write off. Following his experience, I asked Alex what changes he'd like to see made to the way that the industry treats neurodiverse artists, such as himself.

Alex stated that, *'promoters and venues need to understand that not everyone is going to be happy with the vagueness that seems prevalent in most of the UK music scene.*

Making things 'right' is part of why we started the Collective, and the plan is to make all our gigs be what we wish we were getting elsewhere.'

Alex is not alone in this. I also spoke to somebody who has opted to remain anonymous who had the following to say:

'I have Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD), from ongoing abuse and neglect from an early age.

Consequently, nothing is safe, so I've had to find other ways to make myself feel safe. Art did this. It's escapism, it absorbs me, it's like meditation. I created an alternative universe. I guess because there is a huge need that is not met by people, I put everything into my art. I was very passionate about it; it was the most important thing in my life.

However, being a visual artist is also very isolating, because it is such a solitary practice, isolation is probably the worst aspect of my CPTSD and has made working as an artist increasingly difficult, particularly as I have had very little obvious "success, as it's impossible to engage with the professional side of what is required to be a successful artist. Stuff like networking, engaging with galleries and curators, forming working relationships, even the selection/rejection process of submitting work for open exhibitions is unbearable.'

'Consequently, because of the isolation and sense of failure, I fell out of love with visual art and switched to music. I had always loved music but never had thought of performing myself, until, that is, I had to think of a way of going out and connecting with people, because the isolation felt so life-threatening.'

'Through singing in choirs, I found out that singing is one of the very best things to help with mental health. The breathing, the open heartedness, the vibrations, and the feeling of camaraderie. It was a revelation. As it was discovering that I had a voice. It felt unreal, that someone who, as a child, had been almost mute with trauma, could stand up in front of a crowd, and sing solo, even sometimes acapella.'

It was transformative. Of course, I had to deal with a lot of neurosis to get to get that point, which was a valuable journey. But singing has felt like a golden ticket; that I have used as a way of connecting with people.'

'I think if I had had more support as a visual artist I would have made more progress. If I could have said to someone, I can't do all this networking, self-promotion, business stuff because of CPTSD, that would have made a difference. But I don't know who that person is. I feel really sad & frustrated about that. That is what is lacking I think, mentoring.'

It is clear from my discussions with these artists, just how much of an impact art can have on a neurodiverse individual, not just as a coping mechanism but as a fundamental part of their being, and how the wider industry seems tailored towards those who have the capacity to bend themselves to meet mass appeal, which to some just isn't possible.

To mirror what Alex said, it is clear, that smaller communities such as A Void Collective & Northampton Loneliness Project are a step in the right direction as a way of providing the encouragement, and empathy, that is needed to encourage artists to showcase their strengths.

In Praise of the Out-Of-The-Way Places

Alex Botten on **The Joy of Not Being Noticed**

Once upon a time, I lived in Dundee. Dundee is a small city on the East Coast of Scotland, 80 miles from Glasgow, 60 miles from Edinburgh, and 66 miles from Aberdeen. Scotland is an odd place when it comes to distance, as you'd think nothing of hiring a car and driving through to Glasgow for a night out. Hell, I even put a band on in Dundee once and drove them back to Glasgow after the gig. What takes forever to travel in England is relatively straightforward in the far more spread-out Scotland. Still, Dundee was a little bit out of the way, a bit of a backwater, not the kind of place that would capture the attention of the national music press in the same way as Glasgow did in 1994 when Radio One rocked up for the Sound City festival and revealed the wonders of Mogwai, Arab Strap, the Delgados and dozens of other brilliant bands to the wider UK.

What Dundee lacked in attention, it more than made up for in students. It had loads of them, with the city population growing by almost 10% during term time at the two big universities (Dundee and Abertay). This meant it had bands, lots and lots of bands, and a lot of them were superb. What other city could have boasted Gerils, Spare Snare, Laeto, Candystore Prophets, Lipsick!, Yul-Peter, Mercury Tilt Switch, Spyamp, Loki, The A Forest, Infernal, Hamper, [box], Nikita, Magnetic North Pole, Voigt Kampf, and a nascent Snow Patrol (recently renamed from Polar Bear) all kicking around at the same time? Per head of population, Dundee had more great bands at the end of the last century than anywhere else in Scotland, a country that had more great bands per head than the whole of the rest of the UK.

Why was this? I suspect it was the lack of attention, the lack of eager journalists and record label money. No one was going to get signed after playing a gig at Drouthy Neebors or the West Port Bar, no matter how packed the night was (and they were often rammed). Free of the shackles of expectation, the bands just did what they did, and they were all the better for it. Spare Snare couldn't have come from anywhere other than Dundee, and the Sonic Youth-meets-Albert Ayler-meets-The Fall rantings of Gerils wouldn't have been born in the more genteel suburbs of Edinburgh.

Why am I telling you this? Because I believe Northampton is like Dundee in certain ways. It is a town with far more bands than it should have; those bands aren't desperately chasing 'success', and most of them are amazing. It will never be seen as cool, and the music press (what still exists of it) will never descend on it, causing every band in sight to be signed (remember Manchester when the Stone Roses broke? Everyone with a guitar in that city got a deal!), but that has caused magic to happen.

No doubt it's the same in all out-of-the-way places, but let's take a moment to realise and reflect on how special our out-of-the-way place is.

Bollocks at the Back

The Flatman Crossword

Across

4. Siouxsie and the Banshees song is enchanted, mesmerised etc (10)

7. Pet Shop Boys single mixing saints in? (3,1,3)

10. Blondie LP is unable to leave the building due to this (2,4)

13. Black Sabbath song is insecure, fearful etc (8)

14. English Teacher LP is unsure who Sharleen Spiteri is, though does vaguely recognise a few songs? (4,5,2,5)

Down

1. Fontaines D.C. LP is golder, or at least somewhere within it (6)

2. Pixies song is absolutely massive! (8)

3. Sea Power single firmly rejects devilry (2,7)

5. Bowie LP is quite far down (3)

6. Filthy Sonic Youth LP (5)

8. Shoegaze band had a sluggish plunge (8)

9. Fugazi LP does the same thing over and over again (8)

11. Multipurpose Nirvana LP capable of removing tough stains (5)

12. Interpol single is absolutely not good (4)

15. Extreme Depeche Mode LP (5)

16. Portishead LP you may spit out if you're being childish (5)

Nix Nene Writes

It's not unsual at this time of year to find me propping up the bar at the Wig & Pen, or as I will always consider it the... well, whatever it was called before, embarassingly I can't remember. Was it the Race Horse? No, that was the Black Prince, wasn't it? Ah, the good old days of the Race Horse, proper goth pub that was, and I spent many any evening at this time of year propping up the bar complaining about the smell of the damp leather jackets with the tippexed 'Sisterhood' logos on the back! In many ways my memories of winter in Northampton mostly centre around propping up bars. I recall many a happy evening in the Mailcoach, propping up the bar, complaining to anyone who would listen about how smelly the Race Horse had been. Those were the days! Propping up bars, holding forth like a true raconteur! I was the cock of the walk, the king of the county back then! Propping up (cont. pg 1981)

A Void Disaster with our Monthly Horoscopes by

Terry Kinesis

Aries (March 21- Apr 20) The entrails have spoken: In the year of our Lord, 2026, Northside will rise again, and with them a plague of floppy fringes and inane drug references. (Don't) Sing L.S.D!

Taurus (Apr 21- May 21) A image burn of Noel Edmunds has been sighted on a piece of toast in Chichester and the Red Box Cult has responded to the call. Seek substance and reject the ephemeral.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21) Whispering Bob Harris has crossed the veil and is questioning the legitimacy of your band. "Mock rock" indeed! Prove your doubters wrong.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22) Dr Bowie has looked at your test results, and I'm sorry to tell you this but you've got 5 Years...that's all you've got. Make the most of what little time you have left.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22) A graven image of Tele Savalas has been sighted by sailors in the North Atlantic, crooning seedy love songs like some kind hideous, bald siren. It's time to ditch the mustard coloured rollneck. It never suited you anyway.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22) "Eyes that freeze like ice/Cold electric blue those diamond lights". So sayeth twin prophets Glen and Chris. Scary stuff, but what were they talking about? Email terry.kinesis@avoidmail.com I'd love to know!

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22) The very fact that you share a star sign with indie Crypt Keeper, Steve Lamacq is worrying. Change your ways immediately or the run the risk of forever dining out on the Richey Edwards '4 Real' anecdote.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21) Oh you've got green eyes, oh you've got grey eyes, oh you've got blue eyes... Life is not an all-you-can-eat buffet. Try not to give into Temptation this month.

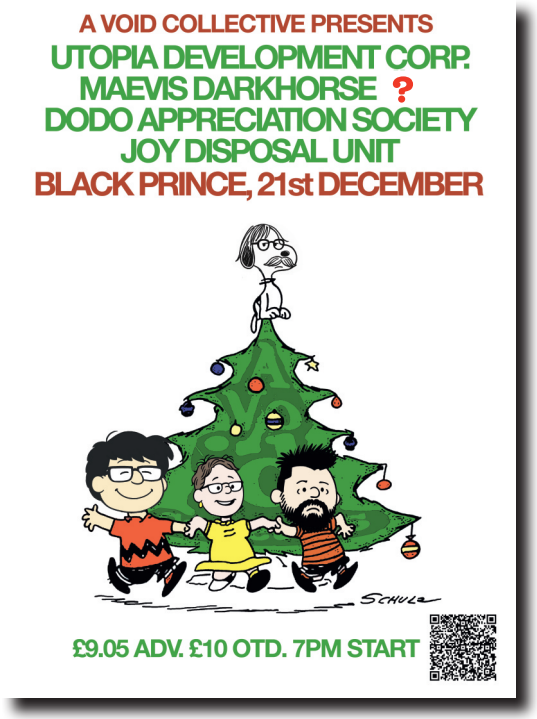
Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21) The dead speak! In this case it's the voice of John Lennon, not Palpatine. He says he regrets walking back his comments about the Beatles being bigger than Jesus, and wishes he'd gone further. Blaspheme to your heart's content and you will have a good month.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 20) "Sweet dreams are made of cheese", "the ghost of Tom Chode"; for years you've been getting lyrics wrong - sometimes to funny effect, sometimes to the horror of others. Embrace what makes you different.

Aquarius (Jan 21 – Feb 19) You wake up screaming, an image of the man in chains from Howard Jones' TOTPs debut lingering in your mind. Fear not, his name was Jed Hoile and was there of his own free will. Throw off your mental chains!

Pisces (Feb 20 – March 20) Your dark, secret love of MOR, post- grunge plodders, Nickelback has been exposed. Indulge in as many guilty pleasures as you like this month, but be prepared to pay the price.

Double issue means two gigs on the back page! 27th of November is the next event at the Lab, free in (or a quid to none members...



...while the December show is our end of year party and fund raiser, with a mystery act after ÜLV broke up just before we went to print. We'd love to see you at both!

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Want to play one of our shows or write for us? Drop us a line at https://linktr.ee/avoidcollective

Next Issue: we'll be back in the new year, with more information about our upcoming festival, plus all the usual reviews, interviews, and opinions.